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PREFERENCE STUDIES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES

W. Linwood Chase
and
Gilbert M. Wilson

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by W. LINWOOD CHASE AND GILBERT M. WILSON

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PREFERENCE STUDIES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES

By W. Linwood Chase and Gilbert M. Wilson

This bulletin reports the research which has been done at Boston University School of Education in preferences which might have an effect upon the teaching of social studies in elementary classrooms. The significant action level of any curriculum is found where teachers are working with children in individual classrooms. Research on behavior of children may tend to be pedantic unless subsequent behavior can be guided and changed in the light of the revelations.

No attempt is being made in this bulletin to review the history of research in children's interests, subject preferences, or preferences for different types of activities in elementary school social studies. The quantity of the research in subject preferences or in likes and dislikes for certain types of activities in teaching the social studies is meager. The Twelfth Yearbook of the California Elementary School Principals' Association,[1] the study by Jersild and Tasch,[2] and a brief report by one of the present writers,[3] constitute the major contributions in preferences for social studies as compared with other school subjects.

Chapter I

SUBJECT PREFERENCES OF FIFTH-GRADE CHILDREN AND THEIR TEACHERS

The collection of data for the first major study in subject preferences was made in December, 1947, from children at the fifth-grade level. The study was repeated in all its phases by collection of exactly the same kind of data, again at the fifth-grade level, in January, 1957.[4] Both times the investigations were facilitated by the cooperation of the New England School Development Council[5] through approval of the Executive Com-

[1] *Children's Interests*, Twelfth Yearbook of the California Elementary School Principals' Association. Sacramento: News Publishing Company, 1940.

[2] Arthur T. Jersild and Ruth J. Tasch, *Children's Interests and What They Suggest for Education*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949.

[3] W. Linwood Chase, "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children," *Elementary School Journal*, 50:204–211, December, 1949.

[4] Helen C. Blanchard, "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.
Richard Cobleigh et al., "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1957.

[5] New England School Development Council, Spaulding House, 20 Oxford Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

mittee, and notification to member school systems of the opportunity to participate. In 1947, sixty-five New England towns and cities participated, with 13,483 fifth-grade pupils, and in 1957, there were seventy-eight communities with 19,135 fifth-grade pupils.

A simple check list was given each pupil. The check list carried the names of the subjects studied in school and was divided into three columns. In the first column the child was asked to use the figures 1, 2, and 3, to indicate in order the subjects he liked best. In the second column he was requested to circle the letter which indicated how he felt about each subject. For example, he circled *L* if he liked the subject very much; *N*, if he neither liked nor disliked it; and *D*, if he disliked it very much. In the third column he drew a circle around the word which told whether he thought the subject *easy* or *hard*.

The skeptic sometimes says that children would not be very reliable in rating preferences for subjects for they would tend to vary from time to time. In both studies, reliability of the check list was determined by the test-retest method, that is, submitting the check list again two months after the first checking. In the 1947 study, 653 in one city (all for whom there were two checks) were used, and in 1957, there were 909 pupils in two towns. All correlations in both studies were either .98 or .99.

Table 1 shows the rank order of subject preferences and the numbers and per cent of first choices of 13,483 fifth-grade children in 1947, and 19,135 fifth-grade children in 1957.

TABLE 1. Rank Order of Preferences, First Choices Only, of 13,483 Fifth-Grade Children in 1947, and 19,135 Fifth-Grade Children in 1957

1947 Study			1957 Study		
Rank Order of Subjects	*Number Choosing*	*Per Cent*	*Rank Order of Subjects*	*Number Choosing*	*Per Cent*
1. Reading	3,060	22.70	1. Arithmetic	4,098	21.42
2. Arithmetic	2,998	22.24	2. Reading	3,759	19.64
3. Art	2,389	17.72	3. Art	2,895	15.13
4. Social Studies	1,268	9.40	4. Spelling	2,288	11.96
5. Spelling	1,268	9.40	5. Social Studies	2,080	10.87
6. Music	1,241	9.20	6. Science	1,645	8.60
7. Science	609	4.52	7. Music	1,236	6.46
8. Health Educ.	316	2.34	8. Health Educ.	494	2.58
9. Penmanship	258	1.92	9. Penmanship	487	2.54
10. Language	76	0.56	10. Language	153	0.80
Totals	13,483	100.00	Totals	19,135	100.00

In actual rank order, in 1957, social studies fell behind spelling, while in 1947 they were exactly tied in first choice preferences. Since the numbers of pupils in the two studies varied, comparisons should be made on the basis of percentages. Although there is not a statistically significant difference between the 9.40 per cent of first choices in the earlier study and the 10.87 per cent in 1957, there is a strong probability that there has been some gain in preference for social studies not due to possible fluctuations in sampling. Although the difference in percentages between spelling and social studies in the later study is not significant there is a very definite trend in favor of spelling.

In the directions to teachers they were told to take the check lists of school subjects which were sent for the pupils and cross out all subject names not applicable in their local situations. Thus in schools teaching history and geography in the fifth grade, the term social studies was crossed out. In Table 1 and succeeding tables where first choices are counted, the first choices in history, in geography, and in social studies are added together and all reported as first choices in social studies. This means in some cases that the separate subjects of history and geography may be two of the first three choices in subject preferences. It means also in other cases either history or geography may be among the three choices with the other not. Thus, the choice of one subject, although the other is omitted, counts favorably in the general field of social studies. This treatment of the statistics means a bias in favor of social studies. Even with this bias social studies does not rank as high as its devotees would like.

Tables 2 and 3 analyze the first choices of boys and girls. Many other research studies done at Boston University show that as early as the fourth grade, differences between boys and girls in achievement and interest in social studies begin to be evident. Differences in preferences for social studies are noticeable among the fifth-graders we are reporting.

TABLE 2. Rank Order of Preferences, First Choices Only, of 6,932 Fifth-Grade Boys in 1947, and 9,737 Fifth-Grade Boys in 1957

1947 Study			1957 Study		
Rank Order of Subjects	*Number Choosing*	*Per Cent*	*Rank Order of Subjects*	*Number Choosing*	*Per Cent*
1. Arithmetic	1,597	23.04	1. Arithmetic	2,174	22.33
2. Reading	1,529	22.06	2. Reading	1,668	17.13
3. Art	1,286	18.56	3. Art	1,529	15.70
4. Social Studies	834	12.03	4. Social Studies	1,372	14.09
5. Spelling	516	7.44	5. Science	1,256	12.90
6. Science	425	6.13	6. Spelling	844	8.67
7. Music	421	6.07	7. Music	388	3.99
8. Health Educ.	195	2.81	8. Health Educ.	298	3.06
9. Penmanship	99	1.43	9. Penmanship	154	1.58
10. Language	30	0.43	10. Language	54	0.55
Totals	6,932	100.00	Totals	9,737	100.00

For boys, the rank order of subject preference was unchanged from 1947 except that science and spelling changed places with science moving up. However, there are some other changes worth noting. The drop in the percentage of boys making reading a first choice was statistically significant.[6] The increase in first choices for science was also statistically significant. This increase is not due so much to difference in popularity from 1947 as it is to the fact that more children are studying science now in elementary schools. In 1947 it was a subject often crossed off by teachers from the check list because it was not offered. In 1957 it was taught in some classrooms of every one of the 78 towns and cities in the study.

[6]Using the formula for determining the critical ratio from difference of percentages and the Edgerton tables (Harold A. Edgerton and Donald G. Paterson, "Table of Standard Errors and Probable Errors of Percentages for Varying Numbers of Cases" in *Journal of Applied Psychology* for September, 1926).

TABLE 3. Rank Order Preferences, First Choices Only, of 6,551 Fifth-Grade Girls in 1947, and 9,398 Fifth-Grade Girls in 1957

1947 Study			1957 Study		
Rank Order of Subjects	*Number Choosing*	*Per Cent*	*Rank Order of Subjects*	*Number Choosing*	*Per Cent*
1. Reading	1,531	23.36	1. Reading	2,091	22.25
2. Arithmetic	1,401	21.39	2. Arithmetic	1,924	20.47
3. Art	1,103	16.84	3. Spelling	1,444	15.37
4. Music	820	12.52	4. Art	1,366	14.54
5. Spelling	752	11.48	5. Music	848	9.02
6. Social Studies	434	6.62	6. Social Studies	708	7.53
7. Science	184	2.81	7. Science	389	4.14
8. Penmanship	159	2.43	8. Penmanship	333	3.54
9. Health Educ.	121	1.85	9. Health Educ.	196	2.09
10. Language	46	0.70	10. Language	99	1.05
Totals	6,551	100.00	Totals	9,398	100.00

There was somewhat more shifting during the decade in the rank order of preferences among girls than there was among boys, although there were no statistically significant differences. However, the climb of spelling from fifth place in 1947 to third place in 1957 showed a very strong tendency that the change was due far more to deliberate choice than to chance in the sampling. The percentage drop in music that changed it from fourth place to fifth place showed nearly as strong a tendency toward choice rather than sample fluctuation. Social studies showed scarcely any growth in preference during the ten-year period.

In 1947 there was a difference between boys and girls in first-choice preferences for social studies of 5.41 per cent in favor of the boys. In 1957 the difference had increased to 6.56 per cent. Both of these differences are statistically significant. The increase in difference should be of some concern to those who teach social studies.

When we turn to another part of the study and analyze the data on first, second, and third choices combined we still find real differences between boys and girls in their preferences for social studies with a slight increase in 1957 over 1947.

Effective teachers of social studies in the middle grades tell us that one does not have to plan boy activities and girl activities with social studies material. Activities, which are good in themselves, seem to have appeal to both boys and girls, although there are some differences as will be noted later. The present writers still are unable to account for sex differences. It may be in the culture pattern of the way boys and girls are trained in the growing up process. Perhaps the greater venturesomeness of boys, their greater mobility in their home communities, the appeal to them of the venture figure in history, possible greater interest in the work of the world, are all elements that are more a part of maleness than femaleness. Is it possible that there may be a perpetuation of these girl differences through the female line by mother saying to daughter, "Don't worry too much dear, I never liked the stuff very much myself"?

Teacher Preferences

Each teacher was asked to indicate the single subject he most enjoyed teaching. In neither investigation, 1947 or 1957, did a single teacher choose health education or penmanship as his best liked subject.

TABLE 4. Rank Order of Favorite Subjects of Teachers in 1947 and 1957

	1947 Study			1957 Study		
	Subject	*No. of Teachers*	*Per Cent*	*Subject*	*No. of Teachers*	*Per Cent*
1.	Arithmetic	221	40.68	Arithmetic	288	39.79
2.	Social Studies	70	12.89	Social Studies	185	25.55
3.	Geography	67	12.34	Reading	85	11.74
4.	Reading	64	11.79	Language	50	6.91
5.	History	38	7.01	Geography	43	5.94
6.	Language	38	7.00	History	25	3.45
7.	Music	23	4.24	Science	23	3.17
8.	Science	12	2.21	Music	14	1.93
9.	Art	9	1.66	Spelling	6	.83
10.	Spelling	1	.18	Art	4	.69
	Totals	543	100.00	Totals	724	100.00

In each of the studies the variance from the over-all totals in the number of teachers and pupils as reported in Tables 4 and 5, is due to the fact that some teachers failed to express a preference or preferred social studies when that subject was taught as the separate subjects of history and geography in their classrooms, thus neither the teacher nor the pupil check list could be used in this part of the analysis.

TABLE 5. Subject Preferences and Percentage of Teachers and the Total Number and Percentage of Their Pupils Who Prefer the Same Subjects in Combined First, Second, and Third Choices in the 1947 and 1957 Studies

	1947 Study			1957 Study		
Subject	*Per Cent Teachers Choosing*	*No. of Pupils Taught*	*Per Cent of Their Pupils Choosing*	*Per Cent Teachers Choosing*	*No. of Pupils Taught*	*Per Cent of Their Pupils Choosing*
1. Arithmetic	40.68	5,251	52.42	39.79	7,197	52.00
2. Social Studies	12.89	1,680	32.92	25.55	4,421	32.99
3. Geography	12.34	1,576	22.28	5.94	1,072	25.26
4. Reading	11.79	1,570	55.92	11.74	1,122	52.92
5. History	7.01	965	32.84	3.45	627	38.26
6. Language	7.00	906	10.36	6.91	1,259	11.74
7. Music	4.24	530	43.78	1.93	369	35.49
8. Science	2.21	267	26.97	3.17	501	37.12
9. Art	1.66	244	52.45	.69	134	44.76
10. Spelling	.18	10	40.00	.83	125	54.40
Totals	100.00	12,999		100.00	16,827	

There has been a hypothesis that a teacher's intense interest in a particular subject might well influence pupils' interest in the same subject. In the 1947 study 5,382 pupils out of 12,999 chose in first, second or third place, the subjects most preferred by their teachers. This was 41.40 per cent of the pupils. In 1957, 41.01 per cent, or 6,901 out of 16,827 pupils, had as one of their first three choices the subject which their teachers best liked to teach. Obviously, there is a statistically significant difference in favor of

the majority of pupils not having as one of their three most preferred subjects the subject chosen by the teacher as his preference in teaching.

However, in some specified subject areas, and sometimes in differences between boys and girls, children significantly chose subjects favored by their teachers, even if over-all the hypothesis is not true. There are variances in the findings of the 1947 and 1957 studies.

In both studies a critical ratio of 3.00 was arbitrarily chosen for the level of significance between percentages, rather than the 2.57 ratio at the one per cent level of significance. In reference to the critical ratio and its implications Wert says, "Whenever the ratio is three or more, it is a practical certainty that the difference is too great to be the result of sampling fluctuations."[7]

In Chart 1, pupils preferring the same subjects as teachers are referred to as the P.T.P. group (Pupil-Teacher Preference group). Pupils in classrooms whose first three choices do not coincide with their teachers' preferences are referred to as the P.N.T.P. group (Pupil-Non-Teacher Preference group).

CHART 1. Subjects and Groups Preferring the Same Subjects Their Teachers Preferred When Pupils' First, Second, and Third Choices Are Combined, Where Significant Critical Ratios of 3.00 and Above Were Obtained

Subjects	*Group Favored in 1947*	*Group Favored in 1957*
Arithmetic	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.	
Social Studies	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.
Geography	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.
Reading		
History	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.
Language	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.	
Music	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.	
Science	P.T.P. over P.N.T.P.	
Art		
Spelling		

Curriculum-wise, the ten-year period has seen an increase in the number of integrated or fused courses in social studies, and a decrease in geography and history being taught as separate subjects. Table 5 shows a decrease in percentage of teachers choosing geography and history as their preferred choices in 1957, but the total percentage of teachers choosing social studies, geography, and history is slightly higher in 1957 than in 1947. Since there is significance in the fact that more children make social studies a preference where their teachers have it a preference it would appear that one way to increase interest of pupils in the social studies area is to interest more teachers in it. The differences we see in the preference of boys and girls in social studies may carry over into differences between men and women teachers, or continued lack of enthusiasm as girl pupils may carry over when these girls become teachers, although we have no data to substantiate such deductions.

[7]James E. Wert, *Educational Statistics*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1938, p. 145.

CHART 2. Preference Differences Between Boys and Girls for the Subjects Preferred by Their Teachers, Where Significant Critical Ratios of 3.00 and Above Were Obtained

Subjects	*Group Favored in 1947*	*Group Favored in 1957*
Arithmetic		
Social Studies	Boys over girls	Boys over girls
Geography	Boys over girls	
Reading		
History	Boys over girls	
Language		
Music	Girls over boys	
Science		Boys over girls
Art		Boys over girls
Spelling		

Although boys in the above chart, are favored over girls in preferring social studies when their teachers prefer it, we want to remember that boys as a group prefer social studies by a wide margin over girls whether their teachers prefer it or not.

Chapter II

INFLUENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT AND ABILITY ON PREFERENCE

Many factors may influence the preferences of children for certain school subjects. Often, influences are attributed to certain factors even though empirical data to substantiate such claims are lacking. Certainly, such factors as age, intelligence, and reading achievement are thought of when preferences of children for social studies are discussed.

Gardner[1] sought to determine whether children of high reading achievement had preferences for school subjects different from those of children with low reading achievement. Fifth-grade students in two towns served as the population for the investigation. Reading scores for the children were collected and means and standard deviations computed. Those scores higher than one standard deviation above the mean were selected to designate high achievement readers, and scores lower than one standard deviation below the mean were selected to designate low achievement readers. These limits yielded 281 cases — 149 high achievers and 132 low achievers. A critical ratio technique was used to determine whether real differences existed between high and low achievers in reading and between boys and girls in these groups.

Fifty of the 149 high achievers in reading and 32 of the 132 low achievers chose social studies as one of the first three subjects they preferred. Of the 50 high achievers who chose social studies, 14 were girls and 36 were boys.

[1]George H. Gardner, Jr., "Differences in Subject Preferences of High-Achievement Readers and Low-Achievement Readers." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.

Of the 32 low achievers who chose social studies, 11 were girls and 21 were boys.

Comparisons of subject choices were made between high and low achievers in reading on the basis of first choice for a subject and combined 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices for a subject. Other comparisons were made between first choice preferences and combined choice preferences between high and low achievers in reading among boys and among girls.

The obtained critical ratios in no instance were significant so far as social studies were concerned, the highest being 1.52. These figures indicate that achievement in reading has no certainty of influence on the preferences of fifth-graders for social studies.

Cobleigh et al.[2] used the same procedure as Gardner to determine whether changes had occurred since the time of his study. Their population from one town consisted of 228 high achievers in reading and 155 low achievers. Since geography and history were taught as separate subjects, comparisons were made in each area. Of the 228 high achievers, 46 chose geography and 69 chose history as one of the first three subjects they preferred. Sixteen of the 155 low achievers chose geography and 36 chose history as one of their first three choices.

Results of this investigation paralleled the results of the earlier study. No significant critical ratios in history or geography were obtained, the highest being 2.26. Since these figures were not at a significant level, it is not possible to assume a certainty of relationship between reading achievement and preference for social studies.

One portion of the Cobleigh study dealt with the influence of achievement in reading on social studies. This part of the study was specific to social studies and thus differed from the studies discussed above. The purposes were to find out if achievement in reading has an influence on the preferences of fifth-grade children for the subject, their like or dislike for the subject, and their finding the subject hard or easy.

The total fifth-grade population in one city was selected for study and the necessary records were available on 500 boys and 500 girls. High achievement readers were designated as those pupils gaining a grade placement score of 6.0 or more on an achievement test in reading. Low achievement readers were those pupils gaining a grade placement score of 4.0 or less on the same test. Critical ratios were computed to determine the significance of differences between various groups.

Analysis of the data revealed no significant differences between achievement groups and the total population regarding their preferences for social studies. So far as likes and dislikes for social studies were concerned no significant differences were found between the groups studied. These findings are in agreement with those from other studies mentioned earlier.

When the "hard" and "easy" responses were analyzed, two significant differences were found, the only such findings in the study. High achievement readers found social studies easy in comparison with the total group, and the total group compared with high achievement readers found social studies hard. Identical critical ratios of 3.48 were obtained in these instances.

The weight of evidence points to the conclusion that achievement in reading does not significantly affect the preferences of fifth-grade pupils for social studies.

[2]Richard Cobleigh et al., "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1957.

Earley[3] analyzed the influences of intelligence and age differences upon children's preferences for certain school subjects. The entire fifth-grade population of one town yielded records for 352 cases which were classified according to intelligence quotient, chronological age, and sex. In analyzing the data, the author divided the age and intelligence ranges into three groups by using the central intelligence quotient range, 90–109, and by taking the nine month chronological age range, 10.1–10.9, which formed the modal group. The cases which fell below or above these central groups were classified accordingly. Carrying the analysis further, these classifications were combined in smaller groups to show the effect of combined intelligence-age factors upon preference. As a result of this combining, some of the resulting groups included too few cases for statistical treatment so the total number of cases used in the analysis of group combinations was 333.

Only the first choices, subjects most preferred by each child, were matched with the age and intelligence data. Since the four subjects of arithmetic, reading, art, and social studies, accounted for over 72 per cent of the total first choices made, these subjects were chosen for analysis. Twenty-six boys and twenty girls out of the total population chose social studies as their most preferred subject. These figures represent 13.07 per cent of the population. A critical ratio technique was employed to determine significant differences between groups.

When comparisons were made between boys and girls of high intelligence, high intelligence and low chronological age, and high intelligence and average chronological age, the differences favored the girls although not at a statistically significant level.

When comparisons were made between boys and girls of average intelligence, average chronological age, and below average chronological age, the differences, though not statistically significant favored the boys. The same was true of the remaining age-intelligence groupings.

Further comparisons were made between age-intelligence groups and the total population. These comparisons revealed that only two age-intelligence groups were favored over the total population and the total population was favored over the single groups three times. However, in no instance was the critical ratio significant and neither was there a consistent pattern in the results.

From the results of this study it may be concluded that intelligence and chronological age do not significantly affect the preferences of fifth-grade boys and girls for social studies. It may further be concluded that the choices of certain age-intelligence groups do not differ greatly from those of the total population so far as social studies are concerned.

Judging from the results of the studies discussed above, it is not possible to relate such factors as age, intelligence, and reading achievement to the expressed preferences of fifth-grade pupils for social studies. Analysis of the data yielded figures far too low to be of significance. Proceeding from this point, it appears that investigations dealing with various methods, the uses of varied materials, and the differences in teachers will probably bring more positive results than the factors which have been considered here.

[3]William L. Earley, Jr., "An Analysis of the Influences of Intelligence and Age Differences Upon Fifth-Grade Children's Preferences for School Subjects." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.

Chapter III

SOCIAL STUDIES AMONG LIKED AND DISLIKED SCHOOL SUBJECTS

Kinsley[1] investigated the difficulty of well-liked school subjects according to the responses of 13,483 fifth-grade pupils in New England. Her purpose was to determine which subjects were well liked, whether these subjects were considered hard or easy, if there were significant sex differences in well-liked subjects, and whether there were differences between boys and girls as evidenced by their expression of the difficulty of such subjects. On a check list of twelve subjects, pupils marked those they liked and whether they found them easy or hard. If the children had geography and history separately, the term social studies was omitted from the check list; conversely, if these subjects were taught as social studies, history and geography were omitted. A critical ratio technique was used to analyze the data.

The analysis of data revealed a total of 79,413 responses under the "liked-easy" heading. History, geography, and social studies accounted for 10,395, or 13.09 per cent, of the responses. These subjects ranked 10th, 11th, and 12th respectively in the list of twelve. The data revealed a total of 6,992 responses under the "liked-hard" heading. History, geography, and social studies accounted for 1,491, or 21.32 per cent, of the responses. These subjects ranked 8th, 4th (a tie for this position with music), and 11th respectively in the list of twelve. Further analysis of the data showed that girls' responses placed history, geography, and social studies at the end of the list when the "hard" and "easy" responses were totalled together. The same was true for the boys except in the case of history which they placed ahead of language.

When the data were examined to determine whether or not true differences existed between boys and girls as to their likes for subjects as revealed by their choices, several significant facts emerged. Disregarding whether the subject was hard or easy, boys liked history, geography, and social studies more than girls did. In history a critical ratio of 9.69 favored the boys, in geography a critical ratio of 9.48 favored the boys, and in social studies a critical ratio of 8.70 favored the boys. Considering such significant figures, it appears safe to conclude that boys like these subjects much more than girls do.

The data were examined further to find if true differences existed between boys and girls when the liked subjects were marked "easy" or "hard." When the "easy" responses were analyzed it was discovered that boys found history, geography, and social studies easier than did the girls. In history a critical ratio of 10.61 favored the boys, in geography a critical ratio of 9.55 favored the boys, and in social studies a critical ratio of 9.26 favored the boys. Considering the size of critical ratios obtained, it may be concluded that boys find these subjects easier than do girls when they are liked by both. Where liked subjects were marked "hard" by boys and girls, there appeared to be no difference between the groups. No significant critical ratios were obtained in this comparison, the highest being .94.

[1]Katherine M. Kinsley, "Children's Evaluation of the Difficulty of Well-Liked School Subjects." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.

In 1957, Cobleigh et al.[2] using the same procedure as Kinsley[3] investigated the difficulty of well-liked school subjects of 19,169 fifth-grade pupils in New England. Their findings parallel to a great degree the earlier study with some changes in the ranking of history, geography, and social studies.

The analysis of these data revealed a total of 110,182 responses under the "liked-easy" heading. Social studies, history, and geography accounted for 12,293, or 11.16 per cent, of the responses. These subjects ranked 10th, 11th, and 12th respectively in the list of twelve. A total of 8,652 responses was found under the "liked-hard" heading. Social studies, history, and geography accounted for 1,807, or 20.88 per cent, of the responses. These subjects ranked 4th, 11th, and 10th respectively in the list of twelve. It may be noted that social studies changed its position markedly from the earlier study. The analysis showed that responses of girls placed social studies, history, and geography at the end of the list when "hard" and "easy" responses were totalled together. The same was true of the boys except in the case of social studies which placed ahead of language.

When the data were examined to find whether true differences existed between boys and girls, the results were similar to those of the previous study. Disregarding whether the subject was hard or easy, boys liked social studies, history, and geography more than did the girls. All critical ratios favored the boys; 12.73 in social studies, 7.57 in history, and 6.72 in geography. Since the obtained critical ratios are of such significance, it may again be concluded that boys like these subjects more than girls do.

Considering the responses of well-liked subjects when they were marked "easy" by the pupils, further similarity to the earlier study is evident. The boys again found social studies, history, and geography easier than did the girls. In social studies a critical ratio of 3.72 favored the boys, as did a critical ratio of 8.49 in history, and 7.00 in geography. Since all these figures obtained are of significance it may be concluded that the boys find these subjects easier than do the girls when they are liked by both groups.

Where liked subjects were marked "hard" by boys and girls, there were no significant differences obtained but differences favored the boys.

Both studies indicate that boys like social studies, geography, and history better than girls do. The studies also indicate that boys find these subjects easier than do girls. This may give rise to considerable thought and speculation as to why these factors exist. Findings of both studies indicate too that these subjects are not liked as well as many of the other school subjects.

Sullivan[4] studied children's evaluation of the difficulty of disliked school subjects by analyzing the responses of 13,483 fifth-grade pupils in New England. Her purposes were to find which subjects were most disliked, whether these disliked subjects were considered hard or easy, whether there were significant sex differences in dislikes, and whether there were differences between boys and girls as to the difficulty of the disliked subjects.

The data utilized in this investigation came from the same check lists as those of Kinsley. On the check list of twelve subjects, pupils marked those

[2]Cobleigh, *op. cit.*
[3]Kinsley, *op. cit.*
[4]Esther M. Sullivan, "Children's Evaluation of the Difficulty of Disliked School Subjects." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.

they disliked and whether they considered the subject "hard" or "easy." A critical ratio technique was employed in the analysis of the data.

A total of 10,266 dislikes were found in the data — 6,373 for the boys and 3,893 for the girls. Of the total dislikes, social studies accounted for 545, or 5.31 per cent; history accounted for 700, or 6.82 per cent; and geography accounted for 950, or 9.25 per cent. In over-all ranking of the twelve subjects from least to most disliked, social studies ranked 2nd, history ranked 5th, and geography ranked 8th. A different picture was obtained on a breakdown between boys and girls in their dislikes. On a scale from least disliked to most disliked, the responses of boys ranked social studies 2nd, girls 7th; boys ranked history 3rd, girls 10th; and boys ranked geography 7th, girls 12th. These findings indicate that girls disliked these subjects more than boys but boys recorded far more dislikes for all subjects than did the girls.

Critical ratios based on "easy" and "hard" responses for both boys and girls were obtained on the twelve subjects contained in the check list. These figures were 8.40 for geography, 4.08 for history, and 4.88 for social studies. In each case the "hard" category was favored, thus it may be assumed that when these subjects are disliked, children will find them difficult.

The "dislike-easy" total for boys was 1,770, of which 205, or 11.58 per cent, were due to history, geography, and social studies. Their "dislike, hard" total was 4,603, of which 773, or 16.79 per cent, were due to history-geography, and social studies.

Responses from the girls revealed quite a different pattern. Their "dislike-easy" total was 1,124, of which 222, or 19.75 per cent, were due to history, geography, and social studies. Their "dislike-hard" total was 2,769, of which 995, or 35.93 per cent, were due to these three subjects.

When the "easy" and "hard" responses for the boys were analyzed, the critical ratios were geography 4.78, history 1.63, and social studies 2.40. Again in each case the "hard" category was favored but only one obtained figure was at a significant level. This same procedure was applied to the girls' responses and in this case the "hard" category was again favored. The critical ratio for geography was 7.25, for history 3.93, and for social studies 5.81 — all of them were significant.

Further analysis of these data showed that when the dislikes of boys and girls were compared, the girls disliked geography, history, and social studies more than did the boys. Critical ratios favoring the girls in the three subjects were 10.60, 12.95, and 8.54 respectively. The dislike of girls for these subjects was further demonstrated by the comparison of the "dislike-easy" and "dislike-hard" responses of boys and girls. Of the six critical ratios obtained in making these comparisons all were at a significant level but one, and the "hard" category favored the girls while the "easy" category favored the boys. This adds further evidence that girls dislike history, geography, and social studies more than boys do.

Using the same procedure as Sullivan,[5] Cobleigh et al.[6] in 1957 also investigated the difficulty of disliked school subjects. The total population in this study consisted of 19,135 fifth-grade pupils in New England.

[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Cobleigh et al., *op. cit.*

A total of 15,179 dislikes were recorded by the children — 9,666 for boys and 5,513 for the girls. Of these dislikes social studies accounted for 1,530, or 10.08 per cent; geography accounted for 951, or 6.26 per cent; and history accounted for 423, or 2.79 per cent. In over-all ranking of the twelve subjects on the check list from least to most disliked, history ranked 2nd, geography ranked 5th, and social studies placed 10th. When the figures for boys and girls were tallied separately, some interesting differences appeared. On a scale of least to most disliked, responses of boys placed history 1st, responses of girls placed it 5th; boys placed geography 3rd, girls 8th; and boys ranked social studies 7th while the responses of the girls placed it 12th. These findings are similar to those of the earlier study in that the "dislike" responses of girls are greater than those of the boys for these three subjects.

Critical ratios based on total "easy" and "hard" responses were obtained for the twelve subjects contained in the check list. The figure for geography was 10.65, for history 7.27, and for social studies 10.00. In each case the "hard" category was favored, and with the figures being of such proportions it may be assumed that children disliking those subjects will find them difficult.

Analyzing the "easy" and "hard" responses of the boys, critical ratios obtained were geography 6.20, history 4.10, and social studies 8.66. For the girls the figures were geography 11.09, history 7.23, and social studies 6.21. In each instance the figures were significant and all favored the "hard" category.

When the total dislikes of boys and girls for these subjects were compared, it was found that the girls disliked these far more than the boys. Critical ratios favoring the girls were as follows: history 9.60, geography 12.41, and social studies 14.73. The analysis of the "disliked-easy" responses revealed only one significant critical ratio, but the boys were favored in all three cases. Analysis of the "disliked-hard" responses revealed three critical ratios of significance, the lowest being 9.48, and all favored the girls. These findings are quite similar to those of the earlier study and definitely support the conclusion that fifth-grade girls dislike history, geography, and social studies more than do boys.

Considering the findings of all four studies, it certainly appears that boys like social studies subjects more than girls do and that girls dislike these subjects more than boys do. This is most interesting in face of the fact that in terms of over-all responses girls record fewer dislikes for school subjects than do boys. It appears that this should offer much in the way of fruitful research.

Chapter IV

PREFERENCE STUDIES ON ACTIVITIES

One of our earlier studies on activities was initiated to determine how children regard certain methods in handling assignments.[1] Using a situation test Stewart gathered her data from 546 children in grades four, five, and six. It was designed to reveal which assignments are most interesting: use of a single text or several texts; small group or single pattern participation; and pupil or teacher selection of material. It further explored children's preferences for reading, drawing, constructing, writing, or talking activities.

Stewart's general conclusions:

1. Multiple texts were favored more than the single text.
2. Group participation was selected by older children and upper intelligence levels. Partner participation was chosen by the slow learning and younger children.
3. Self-direction was more favored than teacher-direction.
4. Reading activity was not the most popular choice in any grade but was most popular in grade four and least popular in grade six.
5. Writing activity was in low favor in most of the preferences and had its greatest popularity in grade six. More girls then boys preferred writing.
6. In all groups drawing was either first or second choice. The top and lowest quartiles in intelligence preferred it to any other activity.
7. Constructing was generally the top choice among all activities.
8. Talking was the lowest in choice of activities by grades. More grade six girls than boys preferred talking activities.

Writing Activities

Stewart reported writing activities in low favor in the middle grades. Wallenthin[2] investigated the degree of popularity of written activities with 245 fifth grade pupils and 264 sixth grade pupils. Ten writing activities were chosen and a questionnaire of 45 questions in paired comparisons was built which demanded that a choice be made between each activity compared with each other activity. For example, two items in the test were:

20. Which would you prefer
    To write an outline of How Steel is Made ( )
    or
    To write an imaginary diary of a Day in a Steel Mill? ( )
29. Which would you rather do
    Write an imaginary diary of a visit to Denmark ( )
    or
    Write a report by yourself on Denmark?

[1]Dorothy H. Stewart, "Children's Preferences in Types of Assignment." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1945.
[2]Doris V. Wallenthin, "Preferences of Fifth and Sixth Grade Pupils in Written Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1945.

Finding the percentage proportion that items containing "write an imaginary diary" had been checked out of the total possibilities of how many times it could have been marked determined the rank order of this specific written activity when the percentages of checks had been calculated for the other nine types of writing.

TABLE 6. Rank Order and Percentages of Choice for Written Activities by 264 Sixth Grade Pupils and 245 Fifth Grade Pupils

	Grade 6		Grade 5	
Activity	*Rank*	*Per Cent*	*Rank*	*Per Cent*
Work with two or three to write a report	1	60.2	1	63.0
Write a letter	2	55.7	2	54.1
Write a report by yourself	3	54.1	4	51.9
Write a list	4	50.2	6	48.5
Write a diary	5	49.7	3	53.2
Take notes	6	48.9	5	50.9
Write an outline	7	48.2	8	45.0
Copy material	8	46.2	7	48.1
Write a question	9	44.1	10	40.1
Write a summary	10	42.3	9	44.6

The numbers in the population (264 and 245) are so small it cannot be said that a like number from different fifth and sixth grades would surely produce the same rank order. But, the application of the critical ratio to determine statistical significance would show that the last three activities in grade 6 would be in that relative position in relation to the first ranking activity; and that the last five ranking activities in grade 5 would be in that position relative to the first activity. For most of the activities at both grade levels the statistical probabilities are that at the time the study was done they would rank in approximately the same order shown here had other classrooms been used.

Fifth and Sixth Grade Activities

Foley[3] used a check list to find out how sixth grade children felt about doing certain activities with social studies material. In order to have the check list reflect children's ideas and not wholly teachers' thinking, Foley asked her previous year's class to name the things which they liked to do in social studies and those which they disliked. These were supplemented by suggestions from other sources.

There resulted a check list of thirty-eight items on which the children were to indicate their preferences by circling one of the following for each activity:

X I have not done this
L I like it very much
N I neither like nor dislike it
D I dislike it very much

After they had completed checking they were asked to go back over all the items, choose those which they best liked to do by putting 1 in front of the first choice, 2 in front of the second choice, and 3 in front of the third.

[3]Harriet M. Foley, "Preferences of Sixth Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951.

The check list was completed by all of the 398 sixth grade children in a Connecticut town, of whom 203 were boys and 195 were girls. It may be worth noting that less than twelve per cent of all activities judged (398 x 38) were categorized as disliked very much.

TABLE 7. Per Cent in Preference Categories of 203 Sixth Grade Boys and 195 Sixth Grade Girls for 38 Social Studies Activities

	X	L	N	D	F*
Boys	11.06	51.20	24.53	12.61	00.60
Girls	13.39	50.35	25.56	10.12	00.58
Total	12.20	50.79	25.03	11.39	00.59

*Failure to mark or mark correctly.

The thirty-eight activities have been arranged in the order of preference when the 398 children checked those they liked very much. The first twenty-five activities were liked by more than half of the children.

TABLE 8. Rank Order of Activities When Chosen by 203 Boys and 195 Girls in the Category of "I Like It Very Much"

Rank	*Activity*
1	Take a trip to the museum in connection with unit
2	See films, filmstrips, and slides about unit
3	Make up plays about interesting happenings
4	Find a play and act it out
5	Work with a group on a mural or picture
6	Have quiz contests on the most interesting facts
7	Make exhibits to go with the study
8	Draw pictures to illustrate the unit
9	Listen to reports
10	Work in committees on a project or assignment
11	Learn new words
12	Make a relief map, using materials such as salt, flour, etc.
13	Study maps of the country being talked about
14	Discuss films, filmstrips, and slides about unit
15	Collect pictures, poems, and stories to go with the unit
16	Construct models of interesting things studied
17	Dramatize important events studied in a unit
18	Fill in an outline map
19	Draw a map and show products, important cities, etc.
20	Use many different books in social studies
21	Study exhibits which go with the unit
22	Make up your own stories about the unit
23	Make individual booklets on the unit
24	Have discussions in charge of pupils
25	Work by myself on an assignment
26	Make a class booklet about the unit
27	Give reports to the class
28	Read social studies and answer questions made by the pupils
29	Prepare reports for the class
30	Use an outline made by the class for study
31	Use the same social studies book that each child in the class has
32	Make individual outlines for study
33	Use a question guide made by the class for discussion
34	Write out answers to questions placed on the blackboard
35	Read social studies and answer questions made by the teacher
36	Write summaries of important ideas
37	Have a test on the unit when it is finished
38	Have short tests on the day's discussion

There are six activities "liked very much" which show a statistically significant difference between boys and girls. Four of them are in favor of the girls:

17 Dramatize important events studied in a unit
4 Find a play and act it out
15 Collect pictures, poems, and stories to go with the unit
23 Make individual booklets on the unit

Two of the significant differences favor boys:

13 Study maps of the country being talked about
14 Discuss films, filmstrips, and slides about unit

In the total 38 activities, 23 were liked by a majority of the boys and 27 by a majority of the girls.

The relationships in popularity of the various activities change somewhat if the order of preference is taken from tabulations of choices when children have been asked to indicate their first three choices out of all the thirty-eight activities. In this choice pattern the boys and girls have been limited to only three choices as compared with being able to check as many as they wished in the category of "I like it very much." Because of scattering choices among so many activities this means that those activities chosen the greatest number of times may have only a small percentage of the actual total choices made. The exact percentages are indicated in parentheses after each activity.

1 Take a trip to the museum in connection with unit (11.22)
2 See films, filmstrips, and slides about unit (11.22)
4 Find a play and act it out (7.79)
12 Make a relief map, using materials such as salt, flour, etc. (4.94)
19 Draw a map and show products, important cities, etc. (4.52)
3 Make up plays about interesting happenings (4.44)
8 Draw pictures to illustrate the unit (4.27)
6 Have quiz contests on the most interesting facts (3.94)
5 Work with a group on a mural or picture (3.69)
10 Work in committees on a project or assignment (3.60)

None of the ten least popular activities had more than one-half of one per cent of combined first, second, and third choices, meaning that Activities 26 and 37 each had only six choices while Activity 36 had one first choice and no second or third choices among 398 children. Arranged in order from last choice upward they were:

36 Write summaries of important ideas
33 Use a question guide made by the class for discussion
30 Use an outline made by the class for study
34 Write out answers to questions placed on the blackboard
28 Read social studies and answer questions made by the pupils
38 Have short tests on the day's discussion
32 Make individual outlines for study
21 Study exhibits which go with the unit
26 Make a class booklet about the unit
37 Have a test on the unit when it is finished

Foley had all the children indicate subject preferences as was done in the 1947 Subject Preference Study. The results were nearly identical in first

choices for social studies — 9.40 per cent in the 1947 study and 9.82 per cent in her study.

One year later (1952) Duval[4] repeated the Foley study with all of the fifth grade children, 261 boys and 275 girls, in the same Connecticut town used by Foley. Duval duplicated the Foley study exactly. As one might expect the fifth grade preferences were in somewhat different rank order from the sixth grade. But when one examines the per cent of choices they vary little on most activities even though the rank order be different. On only five activities were the percentage differences great enough to say they were significant.

Activity 31 in favor of grade 5 giving it a higher preference
Activity 20 in favor of grade 6 giving it a higher preference
Activity 6 in favor of grade 5 giving it a lower preference
Activity 18 in favor of grade 5 giving it a higher preference
Activity 16 in favor of grade 5 giving it a higher preference

When Table 7 is compared with Table 9 it will be noted that the percentages of choice in the various categories is very similar.

TABLE 9. Per Cent in Preference Categories of 261 Fifth Grade Boys and 275 Fifth Grade Girls for 38 Social Studies Activities

	X	L	N	D	F
Boys	13.52	49.90	23.12	12.88	00.57
Girls	14.64	50.06	24.78	10.31	00.21
Total	14.09	49.99	23.97	11.56	00.39

When preference order for fifth grade is determined on the basis of choosing the three activities most preferred, it is not dissimilar to the sixth grade pattern. Seven of the first ten activities are the same although the order varies some. Activities 14, 16, and 18 were in the first ten in the fifth grade but not in the sixth grade; while Activities 6, 10, and 19 were in the upper ten of sixth grade choices but not fifth. There were only two differences in the bottom ten. Activity 28 was found in grade six and Activity 35 in grade 6.

Duval found first choices in subject preferences as 8.99 per cent for social studies as compared with Foley's sixth grade report of 9.82 per cent. This 8.99 per cent was at little variance with the 1947 reported 9.40 per cent.

Preferences in Social Studies Subject-Matter

Very little is known about what children would choose to study in the field of the social studies if given the opportunity to make choices. Out of all the topics which the field of social studies encompasses, what would children indicate as their preferences for study? What would they want most to learn about? A study by Bresnahan[5] sought an answer. It was necessary to construct an instrument which would reveal children's

[4]David P. Duval, "Preferences of Fifth Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1952.
[5]Virginia W. Bresnahan et al., "Preferences of Children in Grades Two through Eight in Social Studies Areas." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1952.

preferences. A master list of topics that could be a part of a social studies program was compiled. The topics were grouped into nine categories.

Category 1: *People.* Includes all people: famous people, every-day people, professional people, any person who has an individual occupation, and children.

Category 2: *Group occupations.* Includes any occupation in which a group of people contribute to an industry.

Category 3: *Progress through inventions.* Includes anything that has been invented which has helped us to progress in science, medicine, engineering, home life, and the like.

Category 4: *Periods of time.* Includes whole periods of time such as pioneer days, colonial days, or Middle Ages.

Category 5: *Cultural aspects.* Includes situations of freedom, human rights, cultural contributions by other peoples.

Category 6: *Aesthetic aspects.* Includes the development within a country of art, literature, and music.

Category 7: *Social aspects.* Includes reform by religion and political change and its effect on the human being.

Category 8: *Natural resources.* Includes the wealth or lack of wealth that nature has given that country.

Category 9: *Geographic aspects.* Includes size, climate, location, and topography and the effect they have had on particular peoples.

Statements were written at each grade level for each of the categories and then set up in pairs so the pupil could indicate his preference or interest. Thirty-six pairs compared each category with every other category, but, in order to eliminate the possibility of children checking the first statement too frequently, the thirty-six pairs were reversed in the second half of the check list, making seventy-two paired comparisons in all.

Illustration from Grade IV

If you had to choose, which would you rather study about?

( ) What the weather has to do with the way people live?
or
( ) How machines have helped in traveling?

( ) The work of farmers in different countries of the world?
or
( ) How we got the alphabet we use today?

Bresnahan secured preferences from 4,129 pupils in Grades II through VI. In Table 10 the number of children and per cent of choices at each grade level are given for each of the nine categories. Rank order at each grade level is also shown.

TABLE 10. Per Cent of Preferences in Social Studies Subjects Areas of 4,129 Pupils In Grades II through VI

Categories	*II-708*	*Rank*	*III-767*	*Rank*	*IV-905*	*Rank*	*V-972*	*Rank*	*VI-777*	*Rank*
People	50.30	4	44.16	9	61.42	2	61.98	1	58.04	1
Group occupations	51.98	3	46.32	6	51.05	4	45.72	7	47.17	7
Progress through inventions	48.94	6	51.13	4	41.42	8	42.92	8	40.98	9
Periods of time	56.60	2	59.12	1	64.99	1	59.29	2	53.65	3
Cultural aspects	60.50	1	56.73	2	48.56	6	51.76	3	52.01	4
Aesthetic aspects	38.76	9	48.79	5	44.67	7	51.65	4	56.91	2
Social aspects	44.98	8	44.74	8	37.17	9	37.88	9	43.26	8
Natural resources	50.02	5	52.88	3	48.77	5	47.49	6	50.75	5
Geographic aspects	47.92	7	44.94	7	51.82	3	48.74	5	47.21	6

At first glance it would appear that all the percentages are so high in Table 10 that there really is not too much difference in preferences for categories. One might conclude that choices between pairs in the original checking instrument were distributed so widely that it tended toward an average. On the other hand, if one follows the percentages paralleling the rank order in each grade they vary quite widely from first to ninth place — from 60.50 per cent to 38.76 per cent in the second grade, from 59.12 to 44.16 in the third grade, from 64.99 to 37.17 in the fourth grade, from 61.98 to 37.88 in the fifth grade, and from 58.04 to 40.98 in the sixth grade.

Some of the changes in rank order of a category from grade to grade seem difficult to account for. Other categories are fairly consistent like "Periods of time" and "Social aspects." The investigators made no attempt to determine the course of study being pursued by the children in the various towns from whom the preferences were collected. It is possible that what the children were "having" might influence what they thought they would like. It is also possible that choices were in directions away from what they were having in social studies because the grass looked greener in the other pasture. Perhaps the distribution of choices may simply illustrate the wide range of interests of children.

Such studies of children's interests emphasize wide individual differences, also. Every teacher is faced every day with a group of children who differ widely in their experiences, desires, drives and degrees of alertness in relation to the materials and content of the social studies. Unless the teacher is sensitive to these factors, our schools will go right on developing many children who are indifferent to or have a distaste for social studies.

What Children Want to Know About Their World

Many educators believe that children's interests expressed in their questions bear implications for those who are concerned with curriculum. A research project in 1952 collected questions from children in grades four, five, and six with respect to *What Children Want to Know About Their World*.[7]

The directions read to children said: "If someone had the time and knew enough to answer all your questions, what questions would you ask?

[7]Edythe T. Clark et al., "What Children Want to Know About Their World." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1952.

Perhaps you have seen something, heard something, read something, or just thought about something which made you wish someone could answer questions for you about those things. On your papers write down all those questions you would like to have answered. Spell all words the best you can."

The categories used in classifying the questions were the same thirty-three categories and their sub-divisions which Baker used.[8]

A total of 54,389 questions were collected from 4,740 children. Eleven of the thirty-three categories can be classified as social studies. Table 13 shows those categories with the distribution of questions according to boys and girls.

TABLE 13. Number and Per Cent of 54,389 Questions Asked by 2,401 Boys and 2,339 Girls in Grades 4, 5, and 6, Which Can Be Classified in Each of Eleven Social Studies Categories

	Boys		Girls		Total	
Categories	*No. of Ques.*	*Per Cent*	*No. of Ques.*	*Per Cent*	*No. of Ques.*	*Per Cent*
1. Man as a Social Being	2112	7.84	2128	7.75	4240	7.80
2. American History and Government	1285	4.77	1142	4.16	2427	4.46
3. Communication	1636	6.08	2131	7.76	3767	6.93
4. Travel and Transportation	1588	5.90	693	2.52	2281	4.19
5. Inventions	699	2.60	402	1.46	1101	2.02
6. Geography of the U. S. and Its Territories	600	2.23	559	2.04	1159	2.13
7. Distant Lands and Peoples	974	3.61	1039	3.78	2013	3.70
8. Industries and Commercial Products	1688	6.27	1902	6.93	3590	6.60
9. The Local Community	422	1.57	408	1.49	830	1.53
10. Recreation	1293	4.80	1428	5.20	2721	5.00
11. War	1593	5.92	1058	3.85	2651	4.87
Totals	13890	51.59	12890	46.94	26780	49.23

Table 13 shows that 49.23 per cent of the total number of questions asked fall in the categories classified as social studies. Science had 27.95 per cent of the total questions.

Table 14 shows the distribution of the 26,780 social studies questions by grades and the percentage of those questions classified under each of the eleven categories.

[8]Emily V. Baker. *Children's Questions and Their Implications for Planning the Curriculum.* New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945.

TABLE 14. Number and Per Cent of Social Studies Questions Asked by 1,485 Fourth Grade Pupils, 1,811 Fifth Grade Pupils, and 1,444 Sixth Grade Pupils in Each of the Eleven Social Studies Categories

	Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	No. of Ques.	*Per Cent*	*No. of Ques.*	*Per Cent*	*No. of Ques.*	*Per Cent*
1. Man as a Social Being	1194	14.45	1647	16.09	1399	16.89
2. American History and Government	772	9.34	979	9.56	676	8.16
3. Communication	1158	14.02	1352	13.21	1257	15.18
4. Travel and Transportation	587	7.11	848	8.28	846	10.22
5. Inventions	239	2.89	587	5.73	275	3.32
6. Geography of the U. S. and Its Territories	364	4.41	541	5.29	254	3.07
7. Distant Lands and Peoples	691	8.36	511	4.99	811	9.79
8. Industries and Commercial Products	1360	16.46	1533	14.98	697	8.42
9. The Local Community	346	4.19	268	2.62	216	2.61
10. Recreation	1009	12.21	929	9.07	783	9.46
11. War	542	6.56	1042	10.18	1067	12.88
Totals	8262	100.00	10237	100.00	8281	100.00

In a comparison of the Clark study with that made by Baker it was found that the average number of questions asked per child was much greater, 11.47 to 6.06. In every category in the social studies area the percentage of children asking questions exceeded that of the Baker study. In that study, the category *Animal Life* in the field of *Science* ranked first, but in the present study the category *Man as a Social Being* in the *Social Studies* area ranked first.

Pupil Reported Obstacles

In a study concerned with likes and dislikes for history and geography Stacey[6] collected information by having 3,360 sixth grade children respond by checking their feelings toward 46 statements about history and 41 statements about geography in two different check lists. Some of these statements were concerned with what Stacey called pupil obstacles.

TABLE 11. Number and Per Cent of Sixth Grade Pupils Who Have Obstacles in History

Number Responding	*Activity*	*Obstacle for Number of Pupils*	*Per Cent*
3141	Remembering dates	1690	53.80
3260	Too much to remember	1207	37.02
3143	Poor marks in history	951	30.26
3197	Too much to cover	888	27.78
3263	History book hard to read	485	14.86
3190	Dislike for history because reading is hard	433	13.57

[6]Grace R. Stacey et al., "An Analysis of Likes and Dislikes for History and Geography of 3,360 Sixth Grade Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951.

TABLE 12. Number and Per Cent of Sixth Grade Pupils Who Have Obstacles in Geography

Number Responding	*Activity*	*Obstacle for Number of Pupils*	*Per Cent*
3293	Hard to remember what I read	1394	42.33
3363	Difficulty in locating places on a globe	1065	34.67
3228	Poor marks in geography	1055	32.68
3309	Book in geography hard to read	589	17.89
3328	Dislike for geography because reading is hard	429	12.89

Consideration of the items in Tables 11 and 12 would seem to indicate that the kinds of emphases made by the teachers of the children responding or failure to provide suitable learning activities contribute in greater or less degree to these pupil obstacles. In other words, teachers can minimize the factors reported as possible obstacles.

Stacey also reported fairly considerable proportions of the 3,360 pupils had never participated in certain history activities. The percentages are shown below:

— making time lines	57.10
— keeping a news bulletin board	36.06
— making booklets	34.32
— making models	33.06
— taking field trips	32.99
— dramatizations	32.00
— making things for exhibits and bulletin boards	26.51
— quiz programs	18.51

There were a number of activities with geography materials which a substantial percentage had never done:

— using workbooks	59.99
— taking field trips	55.21
— keeping bulletin board	41.67
— dramatizations	39.63
— making a class booklet about countries	37.81
— making murals	37.76
— making charts and graphs	36.03
— preparing exhibits	27.27
— listening to resource visitors	24.99
— outlining	15.94
— reporting news about countries	12.59

Other studies have also shown that there are too many classrooms where various kinds of learning activities are never used. The uniform mass assignment is all too common. A wide variety of worthwhile activities is vital to good learning in the social studies.

A teacher does not make his decisions about the use of various activities by avoiding those that research has shown actively disliked by many

children or at least very unpopular. The very activities not preferred by any child may be the very ones he needs to do to promote his learning, his understanding, and his skill. When a teacher knows how many of the children at certain grade levels react to various types of activities he realizes the necessity of carefully planned motivation. He does not avoid desirable activities which may be unpopular with children. He is challenged by the situation presented.

Chapter V

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TEACHER

In two of the communities used in the fifth-grade Subject Preference Study in 1947, a follow-up study was conducted in March, 1950, when the original groups of children were in the seventh grade.[1] This was done for the purpose of comparing their subject preferences two years apart.

In Community A, the questionnaire was given to 774 pupils in grade seven. It was possible to match 559 of these with their fifth-grade questionnaires. Of the 559 only 35, or 6.26 per cent, had made social studies a first choice in the fifth grade, but in the seventh grade 126 of them, or 22.55 per cent, had made it a first choice. This was a remarkable change in social studies preference in two years.

In Community B, the same comparative study was carried out. It showed a small loss in first place choices in the seventh grade among the 204 children the investigators were able to pair.

The unusual gain from grade five to grade seven in Community A was made the subject of a further investigation the following year.[2] None of the 87 children studied (now in the eighth grade) had made social studies a first, second, or third choice when in the fifth grade but all had made it a first choice in the seventh grade. What had brought about the change? In order to get a meaningful answer, one has to get beneath surface answers, either oral or written. Because of this, a somewhat non-directive interview technique was chosen as the most suitable research method. In full recognition of the disadvantages of the interview technique, since it was not wise to structure it too precisely although there were two interviewers, it seemed the only way to try to ferret out causative factors. The time required for each interview ranged from thirty minutes to one hour.

A conversational atmosphere was established after preliminary chit-chat by asking, "What are you studying in social studies right now?" Then, the child was led to discuss his social studies the year before in the seventh grade, then the sixth, and finally the fifth. The respondents were specifically asked to compare social studies in the three grades as to subject-matter, activities, materials, and teachers. Each of the 87 interviews were written up in order that all essential information could later be analyzed.

[1]Harland W. Donahue and Mary E. Dyer. "Subject Preferences of Seventh Grade Children as Compared with Their Fifth Grade Preferences." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1950.

[2]Constance S. Harrier and George F. Laubner. "A Study in the Causes of Change of Attitude Toward Social Studies Between the Fifth and Seventh Grades Among Eighty-Seven Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951.

That no one factor can be singled out as the cause of the radical change from grade five to grade seven is made quite clear by the analyses of the interviews. For each individual child there were a number of factors operating to bring about the change. However, there were certain crucial conditions which were evident. The factor which looms largest so far as number of favorable or unfavorable mentions is concerned is the presence or absence of teacher explanations. The children spoke favorably of the reporting and discussion activities in the seventh grade. On the whole the children felt there was "more to do" in the seventh grade. The social studies course had more depth and variety for them.

The contagion of teacher interest is surely a factor that must be reckoned with, and it was evidently operating in respect to the problem being studied here. While the textbook being used was liked better in the seventh than in the fifth grade, and the greater emphasis in the former on history as contrasted with geography in the latter may have had some influence on the change in attitude of these children, it would seem that the quality of the teacher both personally and knowledge-wise was the catalytic element. The investigators have provided tables in their study showing favorable, unfavorable, and indifferent mentions of subject-matter, activities, and materials, as well as favorable and unfavorable mentions of teachers which were developed through analyses of the interviews.

Twenty Social Studies Classrooms

Of the 537 fifth grade classrooms surveyed in the Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children in 1947, in only ten classrooms did a majority of the children prefer social studies. Wolffer[3] made a study of these classrooms which he called "high-rated" classrooms contrasting them with ten "low-rated" classrooms. "Low-rated" classrooms were those where the teachers selected social studies as their teaching preference, but children did not rate it as their first, second, or even third choice in preference to other subjects.

Wolffer visited all twenty classrooms, observing teaching for half a day, and later interviewing each teacher. He recorded his findings on carefully prepared observation and interview guides. Since it would be manifestly impossible to see all facets of a teacher's methods and practices even in one long visit, the interview helped the investigator to make judgments in these matters. Wolffer summarizes his findings in a long table comparing the techniques and practices found in the ten "high-rated" classrooms with the ten "low-rated" classrooms. Using Wolffer's observation and interview guides Cobleigh et al. repeated the survey of ten "high-rated" and ten "low-rated" classrooms in their 1957 Subject Preference Study. Below are listed the items which offer the most vivid contrasts and indicating in how many of each group of classrooms Wolffer in 1947 and Cobleigh in 1957 found them.

	1947		*1957*	
	High	*Low*	*High*	*Low*
Techniques of Instruction:				
Uses unit method	10	0	10	2
Teacher lists understandings in his planning	10	0	10	1
Uses cooperative planning	10	0	10	2

[3]William A. Wolffer, "Techniques and Practices Used in Twenty Social Studies Classrooms." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.

	1947		1957	
	High	*Low*	*High*	*Low*
Practices and instructional aids:				
Field trips	5	0	8	3
Construction activities	10	4	10	7
Group work	10	0	10	3
Experiments	4	0	6	2
Demonstrations	10	2	10	5
Resource visitors	6	0	5	0
Models	10	3	10	7
Exhibits	9	2	10	6
Dramatizations	10	4	10	6
Skills:				
Book skills —				
Use of glossary	10	0	10	4
Cross references	10	0	10	4
Map skills —				
Reading and interpreting	10	5	10	8
Locating	10	6	5	2
Making	10	6	7	4
Study skills —				
Use of research materials	10	0	10	3
Outlining	10	1	10	5
Summarizing	10	1	10	3
Provision for Individual Needs:				
Adjustment of instruction to reading ability	9	0	10	6
Grouping	9	0	10	5
Awareness of Success and Improvement:				
Individual progress charts	7	1	10	5
Interprets test materials to children	10	2	10	4
Opportunities for Developing Responsibility:				
Bulletin board committees	10	1	10	5
Student council	4	1	3	1
Group leaders	10	0	10	4
Reception committee for visitors	5	0	6	2
Individual and group work	10	1	10	4
Hobbies	9	0	7	1
Study Habits:				
Choosing, planning, carrying out project	10	0	10	2
Using research materials	10	1	10	4
Working for group interests	10	0	10	5
Offering and accepting criticism	10	0	10	3
Comparing notes	10	0	10	5
Interview	3	0	4	1

Here again is shown the importance of high quality activities. The teacher is responsible.

The teacher has a powerful and unique responsibility in the social studies curriculum; in fact, in the elementary school curriculum as a whole. In spite of the principal, supervisor, consultant, and other specialists who may see, help, direct, and supervise the teacher at work from time to time,

what the teacher does and is every minute of every hour of every day with the children in the classroom *is the curriculum* at the action-level where it really counts most.

Making Social Studies Important to Children

We still have not found definitive answers to the question of why social studies are not more popular. We can hazard some hypotheses.

1. Assignment, study, and evaluation cannot be wrapped up by the pupil in a neat little package like arithmetic.
2. The child does not see or feel that he is gaining in significant achievement which is an essential factor in effective learning.
3. Either too many activities are not meaningful or the child is not aware of the purposes behind each activity.
4. The child fails to get the feeling of power or command over continuing valuable processes which should be developed in a social studies skills program.
5. Social studies are not the favorite subjects of the majority of elementary teachers.
6. There is a lack of careful design in methods by which the child can see his progress in small units of growth and have the lift given by continued success.
7. Too much content is overburdened with unskillfully presented facts.
8. Too much whole-class teaching is done with little or no attention to individual differences.

Careful planning that could come from thoughtful analysis of these hypotheses might result in finding ways of making social studies important to children. This would demand cooperative work among teachers with a willingness to explore difficulties together, to share in the building of useful learning materials, and to improve their own knowledges and understandings of social studies content.

PREVIOUS NUMBERS AVAILABLE

February, 1958. ***Success in First Grade Reading,*** **edited by Donald D. Durrell. Postpaid $1.00.**

The results of a program to assure reading success among two thousand first grade children.

December, 1957. ***The Spontaneous Speaking Vocabulary of Children in Primary Grades*** **by Helen A. Murphy. Postpaid, $1.00.**

The vocabulary is presented by grades — kindergarten, grades one, two and three with frequency at each level.

October, 1957. ***Television for Children*** **by Ralph Garry and Others. Postpaid, $1.00.**

Television for Children presents in admirably brief form the judgment of qualified people who have engaged in serious deliberation about television for children.

April, 1957. ***Guidance for the Classroom Teacher*** **by Dugald S. Arbuckle. Postpaid, $1.00.**

Concerned with the teacher's specific functions in the testing and group work aspects of an over-all guidance program.

February, 1957. ***Can We Help Children to Write?*** **by B. Alice Crossley. Postpaid, $1.00.**

A discussion of techniques for helping children to write, beginning with the transition from oral to written work at the primary level.

December, 1956. ***High Interest-Low Vocabulary Reading Materials*** **(a selected booklist) by Helen Blair Sullivan and Lorraine E. Tolman. Postpaid, $1.00.**

Over one thousand books annotated and categorized for use at the elementary and junior high levels.

April, 1956. ***Forecasting Juvenile Delinquency*** **by William C. Kvaraceus. Postpaid, $1.00.**

Extensive consideration of two promising devices now available to professional workers concerned with the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency.

February, 1956. ***Classroom Enrichment Through Pupil Specialties*** **by Donald D. Durrell and Leonard J. Savignano. Postpaid, $1.00.**

A report on how four hundred intermediate grade children followed specialties as a part of their school program.

December, 1955. ***Adjusting to Individual Differences in English*** **by Olive S. Niles and Margaret J. Early. Postpaid, $1.00.**

Ways of adapting the teaching of reading, writing, and listening to individual differences in secondary school English classes.